

Appln. No.: 10/674,163
Amendment Dated September 16, 2004
Reply to Office Action of April 1, 2004

EVG-176US1

Amendments to the Claims: This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1 - 31. (Cancelled)

32. (New) A system for withdrawing permeate from a substrate through a filter during operation of the system and for at least partially cleaning the filter in situ during cleaning of the system, said system comprising:

a vessel having a wall configured to contain substrate;

a compartment positioned adjacent said wall of said vessel and configured to receive substrate from said vessel and to return a portion of received substrate to said vessel during operation of the system;

a filter positioned at least partially within said compartment and configured to separate permeate from substrate in said compartment during operation of the system;

said system being configured for facilitating circulation of substrate during operation of the system and for containing cleaning solution in said compartment and substantially preventing cleaning solution from contacting substrate in said vessel during cleaning of the system.

33. (New) The system recited in claim 32, wherein said compartment is positioned at least partially within said vessel.

34. (New) The system recited in claim 32, wherein said compartment is positioned outside said vessel.

35. (New) The system recited in claim 32, wherein said compartment is configured to receive substrate directly from said vessel.

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36. (New) The system recited in claim 32, wherein said compartment is configured to return a portion of received substrate directly to said vessel.

37. (New) The system recited in claim 32, wherein said filter comprises a membrane through which permeate is separated during operation of the system.

38. (New) The system recited in claim 37, said membrane comprising a plurality of hollow fibers.

39. (New) The system recited in claim 32 comprising two or more compartments and a filter positioned at least partially within each of said compartments.

40. (New) The system recited in claim 39, wherein at least two of said compartments are positioned adjacent one another.

41. (New) The system recited in claim 39, said system being configured for cleaning said filter in situ in at least one of said compartments while operating said filter in at least one other of said compartments.

42. (New) A method for withdrawing permeate from a substrate through a filter during operation and for at least partially cleaning the filter in situ during cleaning, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) at least partially surrounding the filter with a compartment adjacent a wall of a vessel;

(b) during operation,

(i) introducing substrate from the vessel into the compartment,

(ii) returning a portion of received substrate from the compartment to the vessel, and

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(iii) withdrawing, through the filter, permeate from substrate received in the compartment; and

(c) during cleaning,

(i) preventing flow of substrate into the compartment from the vessel,

(ii) introducing a cleaner into the compartment or filter, and

(iii) at least partially submerging the filter to at least partially clean the filter, all while maintaining the filter in situ.

43. (New) The method recited in claim 42, wherein step (a) comprises providing the compartment at least partially within the vessel.

44. (New) The method recited in claim 42, wherein step (a) comprises providing the compartment outside the vessel.

45. (New) The method recited in claim 42, wherein step (b)(i) comprises introducing substrate from the vessel directly into the compartment.

46. (New) The method recited in claim 42, wherein step (b)(ii) comprises returning a portion of received substrate from the compartment directly to the vessel.

47. (New) The method recited in claim 42, wherein step (a) comprises providing two or more compartments each at least partially surrounding a filter.

48. (New) The method recited in claim 47, wherein step (a) comprises positioning at least two of the compartments adjacent one another.

49. (New) The method recited in claim 47, further comprising cleaning a filter in situ in at least one of the compartments while operating a filter in at least one other of the compartments.

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50. (New) A method for adapting a filtration system for cleaning thereof, said filtration system being configured to remove permeate from substrate contained in a vessel, said method comprising the steps of:

- (a) positioning at least one compartment adjacent a wall of the vessel to receive substrate from the vessel and to return a portion of received substrate to the vessel;
- (b) positioning a filter at least partially within the compartment for separating permeate from substrate during operation of the filter; and
- (c) configuring the compartment to
 - (i) contain cleaning solution and substantially prevent cleaning solution from contacting substrate in the vessel during cleaning of the filter, and
 - (ii) receive substrate from the vessel and return a portion of received substrate to the vessel during operation of the filter in the compartment.

51. (New) The method recited in claim 50, wherein step (a) comprises positioning the compartment at least partially within the vessel.

52. (New) The method recited in claim 50, wherein step (a) comprises positioning the compartment outside the vessel.

53. (New) The method recited in claim 50, wherein step (a) comprises positioning the compartment to receive substrate directly from the vessel.

54. (New) The method recited in claim 50, wherein step (a) comprises positioning the compartment to return a portion of received substrate directly to the vessel.

55. (New) The method recited in claim 50, wherein step (a) comprises positioning at least two compartments adjacent one another.

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56. (New) The method recited in claim 50, wherein step (b) comprises positioning a filter at least partially within two or more compartments.

57. (New) The method recited in claim 56, further comprising configuring the system for cleaning a filter in situ in at least one of the compartments while operating a filter in at least one other of the compartments.